

ED-350 (4-3-62)

DECLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY DERIVED FROM:

FBI AUTOMATIC DECLASSIFICATION GUIDE

DATE 03-11-2012

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE, SATURDAY, JUNE 22, 1963

*Following Ever's Funeral***WITHERS IS
BEATEN,
JAILED IN
JACKSON**

Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

P1

Memphis World

Memphis, Tenn.

Date: 6-22-63

Edition:

Author:

Editor:

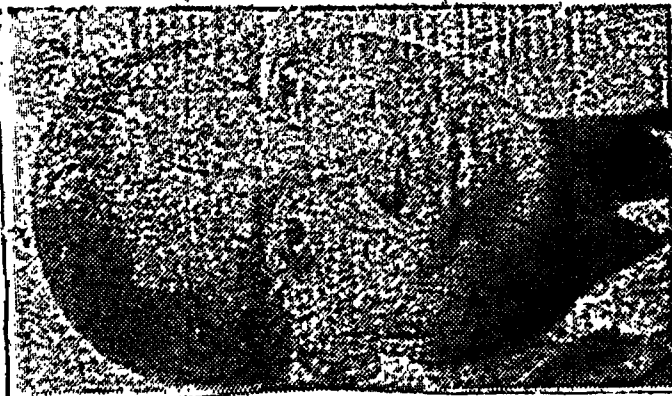
Title: Ernest Columbus Withers

Character: CS (Rac)

or

Classification:

Submitting Office:



ERNEST WITHERS, JR.

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Memphis 44-1077

FBI-Withers-904

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DECLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY DERIVED FROM:
FBI AUTOMATIC DECLASSIFICATION GUIDE
DATE 03-05-2012

Snatched By Cops In Miss.

Ernest Withers, Sr., the popular photographer, is back in Memphis with a couple of knots on his head, a bruised body, a torn coat and a handful of exposed film, but he's mighty happy to be out of the clutches of the Jackson, Miss. law enforcement officers.

Mr. Withers was swooped up by Jackson policemen, beaten about the head and body, tossed into a penal farm truck and hauled off to the Fairgrounds "prison" during the climax of a demonstration that followed the Saturday funeral of Medgar Evers, the NAACP field secretary who was murdered Wednesday morning a week ago.

The photographer, who had been assigned by several papers to "cover" the funeral, spent four hours in prison, one hour of which

he and other prisoners were forced to start with their hands and heads against a wall.

Film in his camera was snatched out by arresting officers, exposed to light, and later returned to him.

Mr. Withers, his son Perry and two Memphis reporters had worked their way to the corner of Farish and Capital where policemen had formed a human barricade blocking about 400 hand-clapping, singing and jeering youngsters bent on breaking through and marching on the heart of town. The young freedom marchers threw bricks and bottles at the cops and shouted, "Shoot, shoot, shoot."

The marchers began moving toward town following Mr. Evers' funeral and after they had followed his remains from the Masonic Temple over a distance of 20 blocks to the Collins Funeral Home.

Mr. Withers was not idle as he stood near the police barricade. He shot scene after scene which included a knife-wielding white boy who was grabbed by policemen as he started for the Negro

(Continued on Page Four)

Snatched By Cops

(Continued from Page One)

When the penal farm truck drove up, policemen made a grab for anyone within their reach. They had been eyeing Withers as he made pictures and he was one of the first they nabbed. "Two of them winged me, each grabbing one of my arms," he said.

"My feet were half in the air and half on the ground as they hustled me to the truck. I was trying to hold onto my camera and trying to duck the blows all at the same time," Withers said.

"The prison truck was already packed when I got there and while I was trying to get in those guys were hitting me from all angles," he told the World.

Thaddeus T. Stokes, editor of the Tri-State Defender, who rode with Mr. Withers to Jackson, was successful in contacting a high police official in the Mississippi capital. The official nally released Withers without charge.

The police victim complained of headaches Tuesday and said he planned visiting a doctor for an examination.

Mark Stanbury, another Memphis photographer and free-lance reporter, flew to Jackson to cover the funeral for Jet. He was not with Withers at the time of the arrests.

James Meredith, the Ole Miss student, rode around Jackson in his Thunderbird almost unnoticed.

The Masonic Temple, scene of Mr. Evers' funeral, has a seating capacity of 3000. But an extra 1000 managed to jam the aisles and dining and kitchen areas.

Temperature outside the temple was 103. It was much hotter inside.

There were 50 or more floral designs, with Dick Gregory's and the NAACP's placed at the foot of the casket. Gregory was there, along with Ralph Bunche, Congressman Diggs, Martin Luther King and Ralph Abernathy.

Fifty cars followed the hearse to the funeral home after rites had been said, and thousands of marchers followed the cars.

FBI-Withers-905

FD-350 (4-3-62)

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DATE 03-05-2012

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ERNEST C. WITHERS, SR. is displaying the coat that Jackson, Mississippi police ripped off of him during a demonstration which he was photographing. He holds the two rolls of film deliberately exposed by police after he was arrested. He is also holding a bloody handkerchief

Defender Photographer Held In Jail 4 Hours After Beating By Police

As Told By

ERNEST C. WITHERS, SR.

As a news photographer, I have covered numerous racial incidents in the South, which began with the Emmett Till trial.

My assignments have since taken me to the Gus Coates shooting at Belzoni, Miss., the George Lee funeral in the Delta following his murder; the Clinton, Tenn. school crisis, Little Rock and the Mack Charles Parker lynching.

But it was only following the Medgar Evers funeral in

Jackson, Miss., last Saturday that I shed my first drops of blood in the line of duty.

After having followed the three-line march with the mourners from the Masonic hall, where the funeral was held, back to Collins Funeral home with the body, the group that was with me went into a store for refreshments.

Note - EVERS Funeral was Sat. 6-15-63.

STARTED UPTOWN

We could hear the young people out in the street singing Freedom songs and could see them dancing. When they started marching uptown on Farris Street, we went out and began following them to see what was going on.

After they reached a certain point, they were stopped

by a barricade of police. The youth stopped and kept singing. Some persons who were not so young were out in the streets dancing and singing the Freedom songs.

A white man with a long-bladed knife tried to break through the line to get at the Negroes, but he was stopped and roughed up by the officers. It was at this point that I began shooting pictures.

BROUGHT DOGS

In the meantime the police had formed another barricade one block away and began moving in. I could hear the dogs barking and the penal farm trucks backing up toward the crowd.

Then the officers started grabbing the demonstrators who were out in the streets and began beating and kicking them as they pushed them toward the trucks. Women, men and teenagers were being beaten, and all of the time I was standing on the sidewalk, photographing one horrible scene after the other amidst the screams.

Suddenly, a large burly white man, who was not an officer, but looked more like one of the sanitation employ-

See BEATEN, Page 2

FBI-Withers-906

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

P 1

New Tri State Defender

Memphis Tenn.

Date: 6-22-63

Edition:

Author:

Editor:

Title: Ernest Columbus Withers

Character: CS(RAC)

or

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Submitting Office:

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the driver drove fast and made sudden stops to add to the discomfort of those who had been arrested.

En route to the Fairgrounds I was concerned about what might happen to the pictures I had made during the arrests, and one young woman said, "Give me the film, and I will hide it for you. They don't search women."

COME OUT.

When we arrived at the Fairgrounds, in an area that looked more like a stockade, the truck stopped, and a policeman came around to the back and said, "All right, we want this nigger photographer to come on out. What did you do with the film? We know that you gave it to one or them nigger women."

When I explained that I was not familiar with the other persons on the truck and did not know who had hidden it, the officer said, "Well, we will search all of these nigger women 'til we find it."

They called a Negro woman dressed in a blue uniform and had her search the women until she found the rolls of film. In the meantime they gave me a top of the head to bottom of the foot search, to make sure that I had not concealed any film on my person.

HEAD TO WALL

Afterward they pushed me toward a man who was taking the names and addresses of persons who had been arrested. When I got to the one that I thought was designated, the man said, "Nigger, that white man didn't tell you to come over here. Get on over to that table."

After they got our names, they made us stand with our heads against the wall for an hour.

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When we were transported back downtown to the jail. It was after we got there that we were fed, and I observed that the food was better seasoned than it had been in Memphis jails.

Four hours after I was arrested, a turnkey came to the cell where a number of us were lodged and called my name.

One of the demonstrators told me, "Don't you get happy. They are only calling you to take your fingerprints."

I was released after Thaddeus T. Stokes, Tri-State Defender editor and William C. Little, signed for me.

The police gave me my film and my camera, but I found out that they had exposed the film that I had taken of them beating the demonstrators. My coat had been torn during the beating they gave me.

I have decided to file a \$100,000 damage suit against the State of Mississippi for false arrest.

Beaten

(Continued From Page 1)

es, came over and snatched me into the street.

BEATING BEGAN

The force of the movement took the top off my camera. As I was trying to retrieve it, a policeman came over and began beating me with nightsticks, and ushering me toward the truck. It appeared that every officer between the spot that I was taking pictures from and the truck joined in beating me. The only way to escape the blows was to get in the truck as fast as one could.

It was only after I got inside the truck that I discovered I had been hurt to the extent that I was bleeding from a cut on my forehead.

There were about 14 persons already inside the truck when I got in, and four of us were shedding blood.

A white man who was shoved in after I was bleeding from cuts on the back of his head. His collar was drenched with blood.

He had on a black armband in mourning for Medgar Evers, and I later learned that he was from Brooklyn.

JABBED STICKS

While those of us who had been arrested were sitting there and demonstrators were being rounded up, police near the truck kept jabbing at us to keep us herded inside.

Some of the women asked for shoes and handbags which they had lost in the streets, and the police picked them from the streets and threw them inside without the slightest regard for ownership.

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DATE 03-05-2012

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**Memphis Man Was
Part Of Award-
Winning Drills**

WASHINGTON, D.C.—When the Andrew D. Turner Memorial Drill Team representing the U.S. Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps detachment at Howard University here, scored top honors at the Fourth annual Sunshine City Drill meet at Tucson, Ariz., recently, a Memphis man participated.

Perry O. Withers is a member of Howard University's 25-man team. A graduate of Mitchell Road high school, he is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest C. Withers, Sr. of 480 W. Brooks Rd. in Memphis, Tenn.



PERRY O. WITHERS

The Howard team, commanded by Cadet Lt. Jackson L. Davis, won first prize in overall performance and originality of its drills. Also, Commander Davis won first prize as the best drill commander in the competition. The only top award to escape the Howard team went to the Naval ROTC representing the University of New Mexico, adjudged the top team during inspection.

Howard's unit, which traveled the greatest distance of the 50 ROTC teams competing, also set a new scoring record for the four-year-old meet, scoring 799 out of a possible 850 points.

Howard's team was one of 28 units representing Army, Air Force, and Navy in the Drill-with-Arms division. An estimated 60,000 persons attended.

P 5, 2-22-64
Tri State Defender

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

P 5

Tri State Defender

Memphis Tenn.

Date: 2-22-64

Edition:

Author:

Editor:

Title: Ernest C Withers
CS (Rac)

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or

Classification:

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Man In The News



ERNEST WITHERS

Ernest Withers Offers For Constable Post

Ernest C. Withers, Sr., photojournalist, father and personable "Johnny on the Spot," is literally the "Man in the News." By virtue of his profession, Mr. Withers is always "where the action is."

Mr. Withers' varied experiences as staff photographer for the Tri-State Defender, area contributor for Johnson Publishing Company and freelance photographer have enabled him to acquire the finesse traditional with his work. He has covered many of the dramatic scenes in the Civil Rights struggle. These include the Emmett Till case, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Mack Park lynching in Mississippi, the murder of Rev. George Lee in Mississippi; the Gus Courts incident in Belzoni, Mississippi; and the desegregation of schools in Clinton, Tennessee and Little Rock, Arkansas.

Mr. Withers was at the gate of "Ole Miss" when James Meredith integrated that insti-

tution. He covered the funeral of Medgar Evers in Mississippi. He was also on hand to photographically record the historic Selma to Montgomery March and was approximately twenty five miles away when the shooting of Mrs. Viola Liuzzo occurred.

More recently, June 5, 1966, to be exact he was at the highway to wish James Meredith well as he began his fateful walk to Mississippi.

Our "Man in the News" possesses a warm sense of humor, an innate sense of timing and the ability to meet people well, stamp their faces and names indelibly in his memory and has thus brought himself to the attention of people in high places. Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey wrote Congressman George Grider from Washington after his visit to Memphis in April that Mr. Withers was the "best photographer I

(Continued On Page 2)

P1 6-25-66
Tri State Defender
Memphis Tenn.

Re: ERNEST C WITHERS

CONFIDENTIAL SOURCE

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JUN 27 1966
FBI-MEMPHIS

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DEFENDER

Man In The News

(Continued From Page 1)

have ever seen," and that wherever he looked while visiting here, he, "saw that man." Governor Frank G. Clement has said that Mr. Withers is, "an excellent photographer" and "it is always good to be in his company."

Mr. Withers announced last week his candidacy for Constable Second Civil District. He bases his candidacy on his experience as one of the original nine Negroes hired as patrolmen by the Memphis Police Department in 1948. He and his partner Wendell Robinson made the first dramatic arrest by Negro patrolmen in the capturing of bandits who held up a liquor store forty minutes after the crime had been com-

mitted.

The "Man in the News" is married to the former Miss Dorothy Currie who was his sweetheart at Manassas High School from which they were both graduated. They are the parents of seven boys and one girl. Their children are Ernest Jr., twenty-two years old and a graduate of Howard University and presently a student at Howard University Law School; Perry, twenty years old and formerly a student at Howard University with plans to enter Memphis State University; Clarence Earl, nineteen years old and a student at Tennessee A & I State University; Wendell, fifteen and an eleventh grader at Mitchell Road; Dedrick, fourteen and

in the ninth grade at Mitchell. Daryl Lewis, thirteen and an eighth grader at Mitchell, Andrew Jerome, eleven years old in the sixth grade at Ford Road and the little girl, Rosalind, nine years old and in the fourth grade at Ford Road.

Though Mr. Withers and his family live at 480 W. Brooks Rd., which is across town from Gospel Temple Baptist Church they maintain membership in the church in which he was reared and which is a few doors down the street from the home of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Withers, 1062 Manassas. Mr. Withers and his family are all members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

FBI-Withers-926

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DATE 02-27-2012

Arthur Earl Withers Is Buried

P1 Tri State Defender 1-3-70

Leader In North Memphis Area

Funeral services for Arthur Earl Withers, father of well-known Memphis photographer Ernest C. Withers, were held last Sunday afternoon at the Gospel Temple Baptist Church. The eulogy was delivered by the Rev. Neasbie Alston, pastor of the church.

Mr. Withers, who was 90 and lived at 1062 N. Manassas st., died at the Lynwood Convalescent Home on Saturday night, Dec. 20, after a long illness.

Before his retirement several years ago, he had been employed for more than 30 years with the Motor Vehicle section of the Memphis Post Office. He was a civic and church leader in his community for more than 50 years.

A native of Holly Springs, Miss., where he was born May 5, 1889, Mr. Withers was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Christopher Columbus Withers and the grandson of Shas Withers, a slave who ran away and serv-



ARTHUR E. WITHERS Sr.

ed with the Union Army.

His grandfather, against the advice of friends, came back to the plantation after the Civil War to visit his family and

was taken into custody by associates of his former master. He was never seen again.

However, bits of the clothing he was wearing when last seen were found in a place called Pigeon Roost Bottom.

Mr. Withers was educated at the Woodstock Training School and served in France with the 368 Infantry Regiment during World War I. After the war he was a truck driver for various firms until he went to work for the Post Office.

At the age of 28, he was baptized under the pastorage of the late Rev. L. A. Kemp and was actively engaged in church work for the next 52 years of his life, serving in the Sunday School as superintendent and singing in the choir of Jackson Avenue, later Cummings Street Baptist Church, and then Gospel Temple Baptist Church.

His first wife, the mother of his children, was Mrs. Pearl Withers, who died in 1930. The following year he was married to Mrs. Minnie Withers, who survives him.

Giving expressions at the funeral on Sunday were Arthur Phillips, on behalf of the Sunday School; C. W. Stallworth on behalf of the church; Mrs. Artie Nelson on behalf of neighbors.

Also Mrs. Lillian P. Davis, Lone Star Club; Sam Brown, U. S. Postal Service, and his former ministers, the Revs W. L. Varnado and Eugene Waller.

A family eulogy was given by his grandson, Ernest C. Withers, Jr.

Aside from his widow, he is survived by two daughters, Mrs. Alice Jackson of Richmond, Calif., and Mrs. Vivian Peters of Chicago; three sons Dr. J.B. Withers, a pharmacist and Jacob O. Withers of Washington, D.C., and Ernest C. Withers, Sr., of 480 W. Brooks rd.; 32 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren.

Ten of Mr. Withers' grandsons served as pallbearers. They were Ernest C. Withers Jr., Perry O. Withers, Wendell J. Withers, Darryl L. Withers, James B. Withers, Jr., Noble Earl Withers, Clarence Earl Withers, Deadrick J. Withers, Andrew J. Withers and Ernest Harvey Jackson.

Interment was at 12 noon on Monday, Dec. 29 at National Cemetery with the Rev. D. E. Herring offering the graveside prayer.

The R. S. Lewis and Son Funeral Home was in charge of arrangements.

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Father of

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L. J. [Signature]	

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